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TWO DROWNED OPHELIAS.

Taine, in his "Notes on England," has assigned certain qualities to the English painters, which seem to him to have characterized their past work, and which must characterize their future. In the eyes of this Frenchman these peculiarities are artistic defects which can be enumerated under three heads: 1st, Their choice of subject; also caring more for the subject than the way it was treated; 2d, Their high estimate of the soul of man; also nature in its relation to the soul of man, rather than the unmodified aspect of nature; 3d, Their extravagance and crudeness of color.

Considering the last charge first, it certainly has a truth in it. A strong imagination delights in color, and a painter vigorous in this faculty would express it in color, rather than form.

The foremost of the early and late Italian painters, commencing with Fra Angelico, through Raphael, Titian, Giorgone, and through Tintoret, delight in strong and vivid color. The English are rich in this quality of imagination. Shakspeare in verse, Jeremy Taylor in prose, express this faculty, and their fervor of conception breaks out naturally in color; while the French, with keen science, are as naturally absorbed in the more intellectual perception of form as opposed to this intense feeling for color.

Contrast one of Ingres' careful, classical figures, drawn in fair and fine proportion, but painted in low tone and pale monotony of tints, with one of Sir Joshua Reynolds' easy, natural, but high-colored portraits, and the difference will be seen between French and English art. So, also, the French are never carried by rapture beyond the limits of good taste, which is a strongly conservative and timid element, never daring to be original, which originality it is apt to call eccentric, but bowing most deferentially to authority. We concede, then, that often English coloring is strong, startling, and perhaps crude, especially to the imaginative Frenchman.

But we contend that the alleged defects of the other two charges are excellences; that they maintain and express the spiritual side of art rather than the physical, and exalt the soul as ruler of the body.

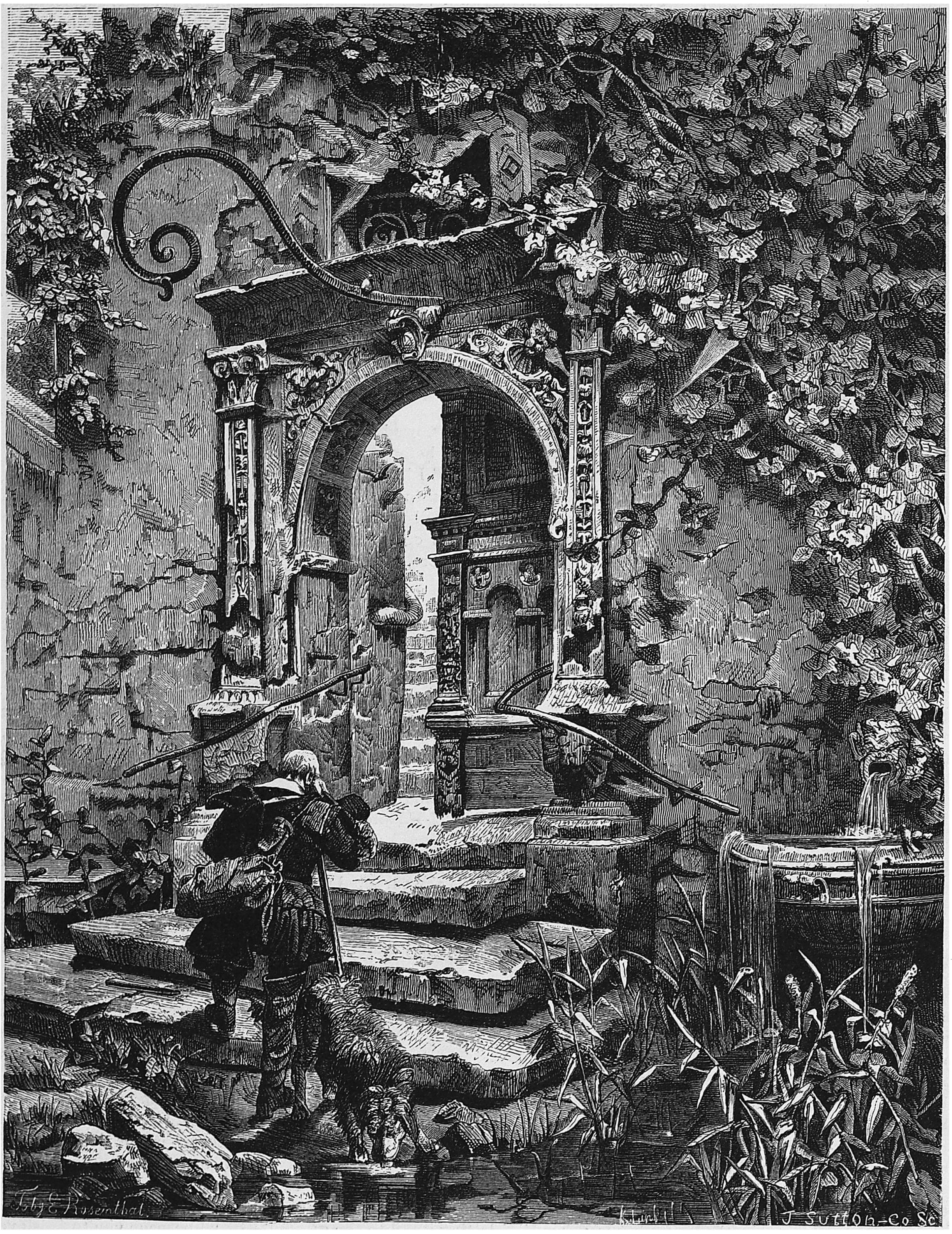
We wish to illustrate the truth or untruth of Taine's charges by two pictures which many lovers of art have seen and many others will see.

The subject of both pictures is the same. The French artist Bertrand, and the English artist Millais, have chosen "Ophelia Drowned in the Brook," so that in the choice of subject there can be no comparison unfavorable to either artist. Bertrand's picture is a representative one, as it bore off the gold medal for the years 1861, 1863, and 1869, and Millais is known as a representative English artist. Leaving out the color, which cannot be compared, as only the engravings of the English picture have reached this country, we wish to compare drawing, foreshortening, beauty, expression, and detail of background, and we claim that Millais' picture has greatly the advantage.

Bertrand's Ophelia has a sweet, calm, blonde face suggesting Madame Nilsson-Rouzaud's, and we can believe the picture was suggested to the artist by her fine acting in the opera of "Hamlet" by Ambroise Thomas. She is floating on the top of the water, in a dark stuff dress, and to bring the face to the front the figure is so foreshortened that it gives an impression of a stout and dumpy peasant girl, rather than the elegant daughter of old Polonius the courtier, the betrothed of the Rose of Denmark. The face is sweet, but the figure awkward, the drapery undefined and uncomfortable. The background is not merely subordinate, but heavy, confused and incomplete. The picture does not ennoble one from the tragedy nobly told, but gives a realistic impression that is disagreeable. You almost fancy that you see the swollen form of a drowned person, and the banks and trees are commonplace.

Millais' Ophelia has a beautiful, wild face, full of sensibility; the eyes are opened but not staring; the mouth is parted; she looks unconscious, and you feel that her senses did not return to her with the shock of the plunge, or in the shudder of the death chill. Her form is wholly submerged, except the head, as a body would float in life, and great awkwardness of position is saved by this treatment. The banks and trees around are one mass of beauty. Flowers bloom, willow boughs droop tenderly, and these lovely details soften the pain of the beautiful, dead face that is still the centre of the picture.

We meet Taine on his own ground, yield him his three points, and then show him representative pictures of the two schools where the Englishman far surpasses the Frenchman because of this very soul in art to which he objects. — *Emily E. Ford.*



RETURN OF THE EXILE. — Toby E. Rosenthal.

RETURN OF THE EXILE.

There is a touching romance connected with the ruined portal of the Spanish castle presented on this page. A noble Spaniard fled from his home to escape persecution. He left his wife, Donna Elvira, and his son, to the care of his supposed friend, Don Domingo de Riviera, and fled to Portugal, where he remained for thirty years. At the end of that time he ventured to return to his home in Spain, protected by a troop of Portuguese cavaliers. As he approached the forests which surrounded his house, he dismounted, took off his spurs, and the sword from his side, saying: "I intend to enter my home, not at the head of a troop of horsemen, with a sword in my hand, but with the peaceful staff of the wanderer." He was hopeful, expecting to meet his wife and son, and find his estate as he had left it. Plunging into the forest, followed by his dog, he came out on the other side only to see a picture of utter desolation. Wild bushes and shrubs overgrew the roads and the remains of the castle walls. He pushed his way through the bushes until a wall projected before him. There was a gate like his own, but old and broken; the water from a fountain near by flowed over the stones, forming a brook, from which the dog stopped to drink. Only a piece of wall, with the gate, and the steps to the door overgrown with grass, remained to mark the spot of his home. "The soldiers of the government have destroyed my home," cried the Spaniard, "but Don Domingo has saved my wife and child. He was a Castilian, and they have sworn faithfulness from their youth. Never has a Riviera been found unfaithful!"

The Spaniard ascended the broad stone steps, the old lantern projecting in his face like a gallows. He passed the portal, entering the *salon* where he pressed his wife and son to his bosom for the last time. He struck his foot against human bones — a skull, the rib of a boy, the arm of a woman. He saw a small iron chest on the floor, consumed with rust. The lock readily yielded to his staff; the lid flew open, and on a strip of parchment he read: "Don Riviera has betrayed us. Revenge me, my husband, whenever you find this. For me there remains only the choice to select between him and death. I am the wife of a Castilian cavalier! Holy Virgin be merciful to us."

The old man kept his eyes on the writing, laughed half-unconsciously, fell to the earth, and died!